

MINUTES OF MARION CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS AT CITY HALL
TUESDAY, JUNE 13, 2017
6:30 P.M.

A regular meeting was held by City Council on Tuesday, June 13, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. over which Mayor Ashley Brady presided. Council members Ralph Atkinson, Ronald Atkinson, Michael Baker, Mayor Pro-tem Emerson, Joseph Frazier, and Tassie Lewis were present. Also present were City Administrator Alan Ammons, City Treasurer Patricia Brown, City Clerk Lakesha Shannon and City Attorney Chris Elliott.

Mayor Ashley Brady called the meeting to order and Pastor Denley Caughman gave the opening prayer. Mr. Ammons led the Pledge of Allegiance. Mayor Brady welcomed citizens, guests and the press (Hometown TV 8). He also thanked the members of Council for being in attendance.

Councilman Michael Baker made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting held on May 9, 2017. The motion was seconded by Councilman Ronald Atkinson; motion carried.

Councilman Ronald Atkinson made a motion to approve the minutes of the budget workshop held on May 16, 2017. The motion was seconded by Councilman Michael Baker; motion carried.

Frank Page, with the Recreation Department, was named the *May Employee of the Month*. Mr. Page was not present due to his attendance at the All-Stars Certification meeting. Mayor Brady expressed his thanks to Mr. Page for stepping up to lead the Recreation Department following the resignation of the former Director.

A Resolution of Appreciation was presented to representatives from Groupe Beneteau to celebrate the company's 30 years of service. Mayor Brady stated that he recently attended the anniversary celebration held at the Marion facility. He noted how amazing the facility is and added that the company employee some very high skilled Marion county citizens.

Councilman Michael Baker made a motion to appoint/reappoint the following committee members for a 3-year term: **Employee Safety Committee** – Chief Trey Cooper, Elizabeth Fick, Ronnie Sanders, Winky Fore, and Captain Cindy Barr; **Fireman's Fund Trust Committee** – Mayor Ashley Brady, Patricia Brown, Chief Trey Cooper, Reaves Gasque and Joey Powell; and **Risk Management Committee** – Lakesha Shannon, Ronnie Sanders, Captain Cindy Barr, Winkie Fore, Chris McKenzie and Chief Trey Cooper. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro-tem Emerson Hunt; motion carried.

Mayor Brady explained the recent updates to the SC Freedom of Information Act, effective May 19, 2017, which requires municipalities to adopt a FOIA policy and rate schedule. He also explained the proposed City of Marion FOIA request form and rate schedule which council members received in their packets. Mayor Brady noted that in an effort to be more transparent, the City's website now includes the budget and audit for the most recent two years, as well as council meeting minutes. Councilman Ralph Atkinson made a motion to adopt the City of Marion's Freedom of Information Act form and rate schedule to comply with the recent FOIA changes. The motion was seconded by Councilman Michael Baker, the motion carried.

Mayor Brady stated that Council approved 1st Reading of the FY2018 budget at last month's meeting and later held a budget workshop to further discuss the budget. A public hearing was held prior to tonight's Council meeting and no comments were received. Councilman Ronald Atkinson made a motion to approve 2nd Reading of

Ordinance 17-01 **An Ordinance to Set Millage for Raising Funds and to Adopt the Budget for the City of Marion, Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2018.** The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro-tem Emerson Hunt. Hearing no discussion, the motion carried to approve the FY2018 Budget.

Mayor Brady stated that Ordinance 17-02 was also discussed during the recent budget workshop and was open for discussion during the public hearing. Councilman Ronald Atkinson made a motion to approve 2nd Reading of Ordinance 17-02 **An Ordinance to Appropriate Local Hospitality Revenues for the City of Marion for the 2017-2018 Fiscal Year.** The motion was seconded by Councilman Michael Baker; motion carried.

Mayor Brady explained that the adoption of Ordinance 17-03 would allow the City of Marion to receive reimbursement from FEMA for salaried employees who are called in by the Mayor or City Administrator to work overtime during a natural disaster. Mayor Pro-tem Emerson Hunt made a motion to approve 2nd Reading of Ordinance 17-03 **An Ordinance of the City of Marion, South Carolina, to Amend the City of Marion Code of Ordinances and the City of Marion Personnel Policy Manual.** The motion was seconded by Councilman Michael Baker; motion carried.

Mayor Brady explained that AWS recently adopted a \$1.00 per cart monthly increase; therefore, the City of Marion is passing along that increase to the consumers of the carts. Mayor Pro-tem Emerson Hunt made a motion to approve 2nd Reading of Ordinance 17-04 **An Ordinance to Amend Rates for Sanitation Services.** The motion was seconded by Councilman Ronald Atkinson; motion carried.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:

Mr. Ammons reported that 5 demolitions of abandoned properties were completed this month, and 4 more are scheduled to be completed by next month. He

stated that 20 properties have been identified so far to be demolished, and there will be more. He stated that a sign is being posted at the identified properties to notify residents that the area will be cleaned up. Mr. Ammons explained that the City has a program that will assist residents who wish to have their property demolished. The resident must come by his office at City Hall to sign the form and be placed on the schedule. He stated that it may take a little time to get to all the properties; however, they are cleaning up the properties that have been abandoned and are in worse shape first.

Mr. Ammons provided an update on the trees that were damaged by Hurricane Matthew. He stated that the remaining tree stumps should be removed by the end of the month. There will be no reimbursement from FEMA for this project. It will be funded strictly from the Tree Budget. He added that the project should be completed in 2-3 weeks.

Mr. Ammons presented Council with information regarding the section of the Personnel Policy concerning insurance for future retirees. He stated that Council discussed this topic several years ago and he wanted to present it again as the employee insurance rates have increased. He stated that municipalities and counties are currently addressing this issue as recently noted in the news. Mayor Ashley Brady stated that the City has a liability of \$700,000 recorded for future retiree's health insurance benefits. He stated that one proposal is to cease retiree health insurance for future new hires that are hired on January 1, 2018 and after. All current employees would be grandfathered in and would remain eligible for retiree health insurance. Another option would be that if an employee has 30 years of service to the City of Marion they would receive retiree health insurance until they became eligible for Medicare. Mayor Brady stated that he does not feel that the City could continue to fund the retiree health insurance forever. He stated that these are just options and this issue could be discussed in more detail in a later date. Mayor Pro-tem Hunt commented that the City should look for ways to continue funding the retiree

insurance because health insurance is one of the biggest expenses a person has when retired. He stated that employee loyalty should be honored, and added that if the retiree insurance could not be funded totally, at least cover a portion of it. Mr. Ammons stated that the City of Marion has a very liberal policy which allows employees to transfer years worked at other employers when they are hired by the City. In some cases, this allows employee to retire after 10 years of service with the City and be eligible for retiree insurance. Councilman Ralph Atkinson commented that Council should investigate the health insurance policy in the personnel manual and give the employees all the benefits that the City can afford; however, Council should also be good stewards of the taxpayer's money by coming up with a policy to better manage the unfunded liability. Mayor Brady asked Mr. Ammons to research this issue further and provide Council with some examples of what other municipalities our size are doing to address this topic.

Mayor Brady announced that City Clerk Lakesha Shannon recently passed the examination to obtain her Advanced Accreditation in Business Licensing.

Mayor Brady stated that some citizens in Harmon Park recently organized a neighbor cleanup. He stated that he assisted with the event that lasted from about 9am – 2pm and a lot was accomplished. He stated that the area looks much better; however, there is more work to be done. He added that a local merchant provided lunch and refreshments. He encouraged each councilmember to organize a cleanup day for any needed area in their district. He stated that he would gladly come out and volunteer. He also stated that the same local merchant has agreed to provide refreshments at any other cleanup day events.

CITY ATTORNEY'S LEGAL UPDATE

City Attorney Chris Elliott had no update.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Mayor Brady stated that Departmental Reports are included in the Council packets.

DISTRICTS AND CITY UPDATE FOR COUNCIL AND MAYOR

Councilman Michael Baker stated that he and Mr. Ammons took care of his concerns during the month.

Councilman Joseph Frazier asked if there were any updates regarding the abandoned property on Dunlop Street that belongs to Marion County. Mr. Ammons stated that the City will have to continue maintaining the property until it is sold. He stated that the County Attorney is currently working to obtain a deed for the property since there has been some interest shown in buying the property. Mr. Ammons stated that he was advised by the County Attorney and County Administrator that they would have an auction on this property and others once the deed is received. Councilman Ralph Atkinson asked if this property is one that has been turned over to the Forfeited Land Commission due to unpaid taxes and abandonment. Mr. Ammons confirmed that this property has been turned over to Forfeited Land Commission and there is some interest in purchasing it. Councilman Ralph Atkinson explained that a property does not automatically become the County's responsibility if the property taxes are not paid or if it's abandoned. He stated that there is a misunderstanding in the procedure. Mr. Ammons stated that obtaining a deed can sometimes be a long process, but the City will address the properties that they can label as a nuisance. Councilman Ronald Atkinson asked if property taxes are being paid on the nursing home property that was recently discussed. Mayor Brady stated that he contacted the property owner and offered to assist with obtaining an asbestos permit from DHEC and demolishing the building. He was advised by the owner that they plan to keep the building and consider other plans for future use. Mayor Brady stated that he offered to have the City tear the building down and replace it with a community park for the children. A grant could be obtained to fund the equipment for the park. He stated that the property owner would not agree to this proposal. Councilman Frazier stated that

it's time to enforce the City ordinance. He stated that the property at the corner of Liberty and Gibson Street needs to be addressed as well. Mayor Brady stated that this property will be placed on the list to review. Mayor Pro-tem Emerson Hunt stated that these properties do need to be addressed; however, Council should refrain from stating the names of property owners publicly. Councilman Frazier asked about a letter received regarding a property on Main Street that was supposed to be torn down by May 19th. Mr. Ammons explained that the letter was referring to a mobile storage building behind the property which has been removed. He stated that the storage building had to be removed because it was not approved by the Historic District Commission. Councilman Frazier asked for an update on Thomas Mobile Home Park. Mr. Ammons stated that he spoke with the property manager and was advised that they are currently working on a proposal to clean up the area.

Councilmembers Ronald Atkinson and Ralph Atkinson had no update.

Councilwoman Tassie Lewis stated that she is thankful for the lights on Gibson and Presbyterian Streets.

Mayor Pro-tem Hunt stated that he has received positive feedback from citizens regarding the overgrown grass being cut. He commented that this is a move in right direction and he hopes that everyone can have patience as issues are addressed.

Mayor Ashley Brady commented that the City will look at the properties referenced by Councilman Frazier and follow the legal procedures to address them.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Councilman Ronald Atkinson made a motion to go into executive session to discuss the City Attorney applications, a personnel matter regarding the Police

Department, and to receive legal advice on the City Compost Site. The motion was seconded by Councilman Joseph Frazier; motion carried.

Returning from executive session, Mayor Ashley Brady stated that no action was taken. Councilman Joseph Frazier made a motion to return to regular session. The motion was seconded by Councilman Ronald Atkinson; motion carried.

Mayor Brady stated that there were two applications received for the City Attorney position. Councilman Joseph Frazier motioned to appoint James Brogdon as the City Attorney. The motion was seconded by Councilman Ronald Atkinson. The motion carried 6-1, with Mayor Pro-tem Emerson Hunt voting no.

Mayor Brady announced some upcoming events. He stated that Council is invited to attend Carolinas Hospital System's 20 year anniversary on June 23rd from 5pm – 8pm at the hospital. On July 1st, a Marion County Fourth of July Celebration event will be held at the Marion County Amphitheater Complex. This event is being sponsored by the City of Marion and Mullins, the Town of Nichols and Sellers, Carolinas Hospital System and Anderson Brothers Bank.

Mayor Brady noted that National Garden Club Week was recently celebrated and a thank-you card was provided to the City by the local Garden Club.

Mayor Brady stated that the Recreation Director resigned last month. There were 14 applications received for the position and 4 applicants were selected for an interview. Kim Elliott was selected as the finalist for the Recreation Director position and is scheduled to begin work on July 10th.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business, Councilman Michael Baker made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilman Ronald Atkinson; motion carried.

Mayor Ashley Brady

City Clerk Lakesha Y. Shannon

Taped: June 13, 2017